WOMEN AND WAR

AN APPEAL TO THE WOMEN OF ALL NATIONS

BY

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THE Fifth Quinquennial Meetings of the International Council of Women (which now represents twenty-three National Councils) were held at the beginning of May in Rome, under the presidency of Lady Aberdeen. The following resolutions on the subject of Peace were adopted :—

1. That the International Council of Women, protesting vehemently against the odious wrongs of which women are the victims in time of war, contrary to international law, appeals to the next Hague Conference, to consider how a more effective international protection of women may be secured which will prevent the continuance of the horrible violation of womanhood that attends all wars.

That this resolution opens the eyes afresh to the brutality of war is incontestable. The sufferings of women through war and militarism are seldom dwelt upon. Books and treaties dealing with arguments against war almost invariably omit to mention the damage done to one half of the human race by this remnant of barbarism.

ARE WOMEN NOT GREATER SUFFERERS THAN MEN ?

There are several aspects of this question. The physical and mental, the direct and indirect suffering. These embrace a great host of women. The physical suffering includes

starvation, disease, violation, loss of home, poverty, sometimes death, slavery and imprisonment. For instance, in the civil war between the States of America, General Sherman swept the southern States bare of food, so that the women and children died of starvation. In the South African war 4,000 women and 15,000 children died of starvation and disease. These are official figures. In the late Balkan war, non-combatants, generally women, were not only starved, but massacred, while rapes and mutilations were reported. Outrages upon women are common in all wars; bestial horrors which are crimes indeed await the women of a conquered country. The brutality lying dormant in some men is kindled by bloodshed; the ape and tiger, the "tooth and claw" come to the surface. War seems to be a concentration of crimes. Under its standard gather violence, malignity, fraud, rage, perfidy and lust. It has been said that "the field of battle is a theatre got up at immense cost for the exhibition of crime on a grand scale." No wonder is it then, that in the Balkan war we read of outrages of Turks upon Bulgarian women, and those of Bulgarians upon Turkish women. It is all the same whether the Cross or the Crescent was uppermost. Cruelty is the child of war, be it raged by Christian or Mohammedan. And in the present deplorable European conflict these horrors are being repeated yet again.

Mental Suffering.

And who can describe adequately the slow torture of fear and suspense, the long agonies of anticipation; the sleepless nights and fevered imagination, the pitiless hours of barren loneliness; the visions of butchered bleeding bodies! And who but those who experience it, can tell of the blow of bereavement, the broken heart of wife or mother or daughter! What must the mental suffering be, in receiving back the sons and husbands, alive indeed, but mutilated or diseased, life-long cripples, or weakened and unable to work!

We can picture the agonised watching of mothers over starving children, the slow death of the dear ones, their heart-rending cries, or their visible fading from the mothers' arms; or the premature births of infants who frequently are neurotic or idiotic, due to ghastly frights and anxieties of mothers in time of war. Their homes burnt, their furniture used for fuel, their crops taken, bedding and clothes stolen; homeless, naked, starved, widows, orphans, childless, such are the victims of war. And do men care? Do they ever think of the stupendous misery they produce in the other half of their nation by their support of war?

Indirect Suffering.

Tens of thousands of women in all countries are in poverty because of the heavy taxation necessary to maintain armaments. For the cost of one Dreadnought, 175,000 children could be fed for a year.

In a recent cartoon called "Armed to the Death" is portrayed a woman crucified on a sword. And are not women crucified by war! How many women are there who can never marry because their potential husbands have been killed off! How many can never become mothers because the potential fathers have been slain; because, also, a great unmarried army is maintained in every country. Then, forsooth! there is an outcry about the birthrate! More babies must be born! What wisdom it is to kill off the strong young men, and then cry out about the birth-rate. But soldiers must be forthcoming for the next war. Therefore women are censured for refusing to bring into the world children, which, in their turn, shall be food for powder.

"Eugenics tell us that the effect of war upon nations is to spoil the breed by the very simple process of the reversion of selection."

"In war, the youngest and strongest of the nation is destroyed, leaving the weaker members to carry on the race." —(Dr. Starr Jordan.)

Not only by the destruction of men in war, but by the law of "regulation" introduced by Napoleon I., whereby vice has been protected for the sake of unmarried armies, have women suffered. And not alone the degraded have paid the toll, but the health and vitality of countless innocent women and children in Europe and throughout the world has been sapped. And so far from fostering chivalry as is claimed, war appears to destroy it, and to substitute sordid selfishness.

Woman Bears the Brunt of War

in a very real sense. She is not responsible for it, for up to the present time she has not been allowed a voice in the affairs of the nations. Man suffers horribly and gives up his life among miseries indescribable, or dies of disease, that nemesis of war; but he is to a great extent responsible. He possesses the political power to prevent it. True that governments often declare war without appealing to the people, but no Government would care to rush into war if it were not pretty sure of the temper of its supporters.

As it is, men on the whole like war, and welcome the excitement of a quarrel with another country. Mrs. St. Clair Stobart has finely phrased it: "Two sets of men with no grudge or personal animosity towards each other have to kill because the statesmen of their respective countries are such thickheads, so dull of wit, or lacking in imagination, that they can devise no better way of securing justice. The most successful at blowing out another's brains are reckoned to have justice on their side and the world will accept the decision with applause." Man allows the carnage "according to rules" and exalts the military profession as the highest. To *man* comes the activity and promotion which war brings. Armament firms are run by men greedy of big dividends;

the newspapers by men who exaggerate and distort news, to create a sensation, to sell papers and thus coin money. Whatever there is of glory, it is for *man*. The fascinations of war, its pomp and pride of uniforms, gold lace, medals and pensions are for *men*. The language used by militarists, whether they be military or business men, indicates the stimulus they find in a prospective war. Such expressions as "it will be a damned good show," "peace is so beastly slow," "now we shall get to business," reveal the satisfaction and excitement that they find in hostilities. And those who follow this lead are hypnotised by the war drums into a feeble acquiescence, and the "stolid stupidity" which masquerades as patriotism claps its hands and is willing to be led anyhow and anywhere. The public seems to be "just a great baby," as Chalmers said long ago.

The delirium of killing, that thrill in the blood which has helped to make the expression of the "game of war," is for *man*. In such a game what recks it that "backs are broken in two, arms twisted off, legs smashed like firewood, heads sliced open or crunched into a jelly by the iron hoofs of horses, or faces trampled."

Gigantic armaments, according to man's verdict, are the only surety of safety! Where are the brains that cannot understand, that the universal *dis*armament of nations would be a surer and less costly means of safety from international war?

The Church of God has been, and is, ruled by men who, with exceptions (notably the Society of Friends), for centuries have been dumb in relation to the crime of war. We are now in the twentieth century since the Prince of Peace was born. The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man are talked of, but how few of the clergy of any denomination carry this teaching to the logical conclusion? It is thus that the "last, heaviest, sharpest, bloodiest plait of thorns" is laid on the brow of the Prince of Peace. War should be condemned as immoral from every pulpit.

" No sweeping condemnation can be passed on war," says a clergyman in a recent book, " The Reproach of the Gospel." Thus is the gigantic evil fatally obscured. Thus does the church strive to glorify " War's red rain ! "

The Indifference of Women

is due to the *laissez-faire* of ignorance and irresponsibility. They, with some exceptions, were like " dumb driven cattle." Until they awoke to their lack of education, they were accustomed to look for their guidance to their religious teachers. Those failed to guide them into the paths of peace-making. Now they have begun to think for themselves their outlook is enlarged, their ideals are more cosmopolitan. They demand a freer social activity, as well as a richer inward development. They are awaking to their responsibilities as life-preservers as well as life-givers. Led by noble women like the Baroness von Suttner on the continent of Europe, by Julia Ward Howe in the United States, and by Ellen Robinson in England, during the past thirty years their voices have been heard urging women to awake, to lift up their voices in a " world-wide protest " against the cruelties of war. The world awaits the help of women, but

Woman is not yet Wide Awake

to her duties and powers of making peace. Yet the great movement towards political equality with men is arousing her and preparing her for this urgent work. The time is coming when Ruskin's words to women will be untrue—" You are the people who glorify the fighting man." As the Women's Movement for political emancipation is international in its scope, and in its ideals, so the demand of women for a more reasonable and lawful way of settling disputes between nations must come from all lands. Different though women of divers countries may be in religion, temperament and language, they

are one in having to bear war's burdens of bereavement, poverty, misery.

When women obtain the franchise, they will have the power to affect legislation. It is this which explains the strenuous efforts of educated women for equal suffrage. They are convinced that perplexing difficulties of legislation need the mother-heart as well as the father-heart to solve them. The mothers of mankind alone know the cost of human life! Therefore they should be to the front in its preservation. The appeal of Julia Ward Howe at the time of the Franco-Prussian War, imploring women to awake to their duties of peace-making, made small impression. She was a pioneer, and as such, "before her time." But her call is being listened to at the present moment. Women are awake to the irrationality of war, as well as to its horrors! And Suffrage or no Suffrage, women hold a key to the solution of this question.

The Key is the Coming Generation.

The children of to-day are the makers of the destiny of to-morrow. Mothers have the first moulding of their minds.

Let mothers, having learnt "the better way than war for the settlement of international disputes," instil into their boys' and girls' minds teaching against war. Let them explain the fallacies which underlie the present state of things. Teach the difference between true and sham patriotism. Ask the children "Why make death and pain artificially over and above what naturally exists?" Show them that the ultimate victory is largely dependent on the "pertinacious power of the purse." That at the present day the only excuse we can make is "that our ancestors did it." That nowadays war is killing by machinery, not the hand to hand conflict of our forefathers; that disasters are common now through the instrumentality of war, such as are specially abhorrent—railway accident, shipwreck, explosions of war

materials, diabolical catastrophes, which in peace we regard with detestation.

Point out to your children the absurdities of Militarism. How " the battle-field is the stupidest place in the world," on one side a hospital, giving drugs, putting on bandages, performing operations, and on the other, the cannon and bayonet manufacturing fresh wounds!

Teach what arbitration means by giving an example of how parents arbitrate between their children in quarrels.

Tell your children of the success of international arbitration to prevent war during the present century. That during the first ten years, ninety-six treaties were signed between nations; that between Chile and Argentina being the most complete. To commemorate this the mothers of Buenos Ayres subscribed for a huge bronze figure of Christ, twenty-six feet high, standing on a globe of the world, which is held on a lofty shaft. This is placed on a mountain which marks the boundary line between the two countries. At the base is a tablet inscribed with the words: " Sooner shall these mountains crumble into dust, than Argentines and Chilians break the peace to which they have pledged themselves at the feet of Christ the Redeemer." It is said that

THE MORAL VIRTUES PRODUCED BY WAR ARE MANY.

Therefore war is good. This is one of the fallacies which the mother must combat. If brave and noble and magnanimous men are produced by war, that is no argument. Famines, fires, flood, railway accident bring out these qualities in some men also! Shall we therefore desire and condone such calamities because they produce such men? The heroes of peace are far more than the heroes of war, though they do not wear their medals on their breasts. Our worst enemies are greed, cruelty, corruption, ignorance, injustice, poverty, anarchism. There is plenty of opportunity for heroism for the boys of the future.

But the soldiers are not the delinquents upon whom we animadvert; they are but the tools of politicians, armament-makers and unscrupulous journalists. Another fallacy is that "you can't change human nature." All history gives this fallacy the lie. How about religious persecution, slavery, duelling? Have they not passed away in the British Empire?

Women Must Learn,

for it is of vital importance that women should know the many sides of this great question. Let them join a Peace Society and obtain literature dealing with these problems. Such can be had very cheaply. Let them contribute to the maintenance of their National Peace Societies. Let them support those noble-hearted men, who in every country are striving to bring in a better method, that they are anxious to be their comrades and eager to support them. In many ways can women, even without the Suffrage, strengthen the hands of the Peace party. Women's Clubs might be formed for the study of the problems of peace and war; of what is being done; what the Hague Conferences have done; how at the last Conference forty-four nations met to discuss Arbitration, and how thirty-five present voted in public in favour of a Treaty. Let her help by rousing public opinion, to bring about the third Hague Conference, which may advance the federation of the nations.

School Peace Leagues.

What mothers can do, teachers who are the guides of the young may do equally well. They can teach history from the standpoint of Peace, and instead of that of battles, civil and social progress; also they can lay stress on names of heroes who have saved life instead of destroying it. The teacher can show how the *will* is involved, that there is no inevitableness about war. It is made because people "will it to be." That

the savage impersonal hate of modern war is indefensible; that the butchery is unmeaning; that to kill off your customers in another country is stupid; that war is barbarism, and means delay of social happiness and progress. And, above all, teach that the poverty of the nations is mainly due to the enormous waste in the childish rivalry in armaments. Sir Max Waechter, who has had long conversations with the Sovereigns and leading statesmen of Europe on this subject, tells that Europe spends on armaments far more than it does on Education, Sanitation and Social Reform combined. More than 1,000,000 people emigrate every year from Europe through economic pressure, which is caused chiefly by the burden of armaments. If the same amount of brains, energy, and half the money, were devoted to the development of international law, and to making friends between nations, the federation of Europe would be firmly established, and armaments would gradually disappear. Money would become more plentiful, salaries and wages would rise. The hundreds of millions of pounds now spent on armaments could be saved, and be applied to industrial and social enterprises, and the millions of able-bodied men, who do nothing but military drill, would become important factors in producing articles required by mankind. (Let every woman who reads this join the "European Federation League," 39, St. James' Street, Piccadilly, London, S.W.)

Women's Appeal to the Clergy

must be made plainly and decidedly with no uncertain sound. Women have the right to do this, for they number two-thirds of the existing Church membership. They are more loyal to the Church than men are. Let them ask for loyalty to this cause in return. The Church has everything to gain, and nothing to lose, by working hand in hand with the mothers of mankind in this crusade against war. It will indeed be to the Church's lasting damage if

women lose faith in their religious teachers. Educated women have no respect for the compromises of religious teachers. They see the fallacies underlying the distinctions drawn between private and public life, between conduct reprehensible from man to man, deemed advisable in Governments. They question the practice of excusing wrong in the aggregate, while the same wrong is condemned in the unit, such as the fallacy that the taking of many lives in war is heroic, while the taking of *one* is criminal.

The Church's services daily echo with the principles of Christ's teaching, against hatred, murder and all uncharitableness in individuals, but in practice, collective hatred, murder and all uncharitableness wins solemn *Te Deums* in buildings dedicated to the Prince of Peace. The Sermon on the Mount is quoted, discussed, admired, and then—explained away. Or the Millennium is made the excuse for inaction. What an anodyne is the Millennium to conscience! When is war condemned? Even missionaries who denounce the feud and battles of the heathen lift up no voice of protest against war being waged between "Christian Countries." Let the Church of God, as Mr. Asquith says, "take her share in expelling the greatest scourge which still threatens the unity and progress of mankind," and she will retain the allegiance of women. The absence of clergymen at Peace Congresses in Europe is very marked, and often commented on.

The Symbolical Figure of Peace

is a woman. Let the symbolism be translated into fact; for is not woman the fore-destined champion of Peace? Emancipated, she must emancipate. She must put her shoulder to the wheels of peace-making, adding her strength to that of good men who are striving for the same end. Then the momentum will be sufficient, and not till then, to crush out "the futile ferocious folly of war" from civilization.

WOMEN OF THE WORKING CLASSES!

It is your husbands, fathers, brothers and sons who are the instruments of war!

Without them international hostilities would be impossible. Your work of education, of persuasion, is to be mainly in your homes. Thus, no one but you can accomplish this reform. Let your hearts grow softer towards suffering, and your brains quicker to comprehend. Cease to be furious at small personal wrongs, while you disregard boundless public ones.

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN

gave the lead to women of all nations when they passed that second resolution

IN ROME LAST MAY,

"which supports warmly the effectual application of the resolutions passed at the Hague Conference for the peaceful settlement of international disputes; and declares its sympathetic desire for the conclusion of treaties through which the Governments pledge themselves in the case of disputes of every kind to enter into negotiations for mediation."

Christianity demands of women this crusade of peace! Philanthropy demands it! Humanitarism demands it! Science demands it! Mothers, wives, daughters, sisters! Go forward—for "Deus vult!" "Dieu le Veut!" "God wills it."

FRANCES S. HALLOWES.

September, 1914.

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